

# IMPRESSIONS OF INSTITUTIONS FOR THE BLIND IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA

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BEFORE undertaking  
 the responsible  
 task of reconstruct-  
 ing the Perkins In-  
 stitution, the trustees  
 sent me abroad last  
 spring to visit for-  
 eign institutions to  
 learn what I could  
 from their buildings,  
 equipment, methods,  
 and results. These  
 would supposedly be  
 somewhat different  
 from those of the  
 American schools,

with many of which I was familiar. Then,  
 too, I felt it would be helpful to meet and  
 know personally the European workers for  
 the blind, many of whom are widely cele-  
 brated in the profession.

Prof. Alexander Mell, director of the  
 Imperial Institution at Vienna, with whom  
 the Perkins Institution has long been in  
 touch, kindly made out my Continental  
 itinerary, even arranging by personal letter  
 for my reception at certain places, and  
 nobody could have been more cordially  
 received than I was at every one. I had  
 spent two boyhood years in Germany, go-  
 ing to school and acquiring a speaking  
 knowledge of German. This fact may have  
 had something to do with my reception;  
 it certainly enabled me to make a more  
 searching inquiry into things than would  
 otherwise have been possible in such short  
 stops and necessarily incomplete surveys as  
 I made. I found the twenty institution  
 directors of Germany and Austria with  
 whom I talked communicative and candid.  
 My notes of these visits and conversations,  
 covering 156 pages, were generally written  
 evenings at the hotels or on the train, and  
 are as fresh as well as full. On reaching  
 a city, I first consulted a directory for the  
 address of every local organization con-  
 ducted by the blind or in their behalf.  
 These included schools, institutions, work-  
 ing homes, workshops, homes for the aged,  
 salesrooms, factories employing any blind



*The Imperial Institution for the Education of the  
 Blind, Vienna, a beautiful structure. An impressive  
 statue of "Father Klein," the Father of the Blind,  
 stands in the entrance hallway. Founded in 1804, or  
 next after the Paris Institution.*

people, stores, shops,  
 or printing offices  
 conducted by the  
 blind, and associa-  
 tions for the blind, of  
 which last there are  
 very many in Europe.  
 I visited the follow-  
 ing places in the  
 order given: Liver-  
 pool, Manchester,  
 Edinburgh, Glasgow,  
 London, Birmingham,  
 Brighton, Leather-  
 head, Hamburg,  
 Hanover, Bruns-

wick, Halle, Leipsic, Chemnitz, Dresden,  
 Breslau, Berlin, Steglitz, Prague, Vienna,  
 Munich, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Wies-  
 baden, Frankfurt, Neuwied, Düren, Paris  
 —in all some sixty-six organizations.

European workers for the blind who  
 have not visited us gather from such illus-  
 trated annual reports as reach them that  
 our institutions are grand and costly affairs  
 compared with theirs. And it is a fact  
 that we have usually paid more attention  
 than they to buildings, equipment, and par-  
 ticularly to the appearance of our pupils.  
 So that I would warn any American in-  
 structor of the blind who is accustomed  
 to pride himself on the way his pupils  
 appear—I would warn him to expect to find  
 less attention paid to such matters, espe-  
 cially on the Continent; but I would urge  
 him to suspend judgment on the character  
 and efficiency of foreign institutions until  
 he had visited several, observed them care-  
 fully, looked beneath the surface, and be-  
 come able to see them from the viewpoint  
 of those responsible for them. If he is  
 able to do this promptly, he will be saved  
 the initial disappointment and even resent-  
 ment which I suffered, for example, upon  
 seeing so many boys and young men in the  
 institutions innocent of collars and ties or  
 of shoe blacking, and with their heads  
 clipped; those over seventeen, perhaps,  
 smoking in the yard; and all the girls  
 without the least ornament or bit of color



*Main building, National Working Home for the Blind, Königswusterhausen, near Berlin. The other buildings are four cottages and a heating, lighting, and laundry structure, all six connected by a covered gallery, said to have been sketched into the plan by the present Emperor of Germany. Buildings and gallery inclose a fine court.*

in their dress. Part of this is due to the fact that so many belong to the industrial department. But then there, as here, the blind come from homes of poverty, only there the poverty is greater and apparently more inevitable. The theory is that, except in the case of tobacco using, the habitual thrift so necessary at home should be followed by the pupils while at school; that collars and ribbons not only cost something, but that their use at school tends to lift the pupils' minds to the unattainable and dim,



*Institution for the Blind of the Province of Saxony, at Halle, a commodious, modern structure: floors of corridors, terraces of rooms, linoleum, cemented down water-tight, and rubbed monthly with turpentine and wax; dormitories and spacious washrooms, having a separate turn-bowl for each pupil, separate towels, etc.; director and five married masters provided suites within this main building. On the same grounds five new Working Home for fifty blind men, finished in 1909.*

and only leads to home discontent. Therefore many institutions for the blind keep such things for Sundays and feast days, and the pupils are led to be thankful for them then, and they are so. Of course this bareness is not everywhere the case; for in one school, on finding pleasing attention



*Institution for the Training, Instruction, Employment, and Care of the Blind, Nuremberg. Buildings comparatively new, but conforming in style to architectural requirements laid down for public buildings of the city.*

paid to the æsthetic in dress, after coming from several where it was absent, I remarked upon it. My host said: "Yes; some of my fellow-directors, especially from Germany, have often blamed me for this, and called it an unwise and unwarranted luxury. We in Austria, in spite of the fact that money is less plenty here, do not commonly carry expediency so far; for example, we do not generally centralize our local efforts for the blind under one management and within one inclosure, preferring to classify and scatter them even in the same city. Perhaps this is less business-like, and there is doubtless less harmony among our institution heads; but the blind benefit."

This remark prepares the way for another warning, which is that the American visitor to most European institutions for the blind, which he has been wont to think of as schools in the American sense, will discover them to be little school and big workshop;



*The Home for Blind Men (in the foreground), the Museum Building (in the background) of the Royal Institution for the Blind at Steglitz, a beautiful suburb of Berlin. Present buildings of recent origin, but the foundation dates back to 1800, the oldest in Germany.*





*Present new ground of the Kármán School for the Blind and its Kindergarten in the country outside of Prague.*

often to embrace also a boarding home for blind men, either learners or regular workers in the shop, a living home for blind women ditto, and occasionally even a retreat for the aged and infirm—a *Blinden-erziehungsheim*, as the Germans very beautifully call the latter. Now the gathering together in one enclosure of all these departments, excellent though each is by itself, is what astomishes and perhaps shocks the American whose conviction it is that children are children, adults adults, invalids invalids, and that neither blindness nor deafness nor any other physical defect should throw into one community, even though they are more or less isolated from one another, school children, adult workers, and the invalid aged. The visitor to a foreign land must take things as he finds them and learn to look for the good. This

frame of mind, once cultivated, will not only render him much more comfortable than otherwise, but will show him things in a new light. At any rate, the more open his mind the more correct his impressions will be and the more worth while his visit. I was some time in settling my mind to see things from the European point of view; in realizing that thrift and economy is the rule of the land, and that many customs are a survival from the past.

In America the lot and condition of the blind is unsettled, is ever changing, but it is hopeful. Assuming as we do that the

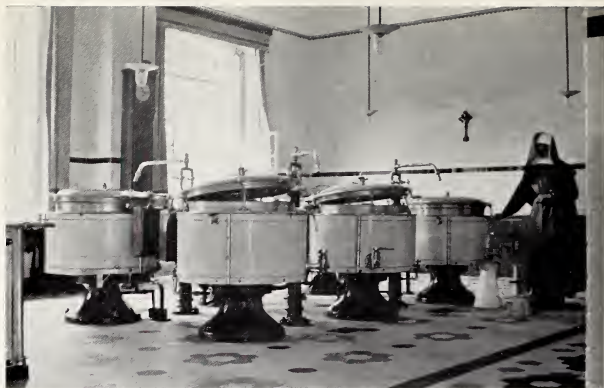


*Annasheim—Home for the Blind (named for the founder, whose given name is Anna), an elaborate structure, designed for one hundred not necessarily old people. Work is an elective here.*



*A new building of the Kármán Employment Institution for the Blind, Prague, founded by Alois Kármán in 1821, contains workshops, offices, and residence of the director, also swimming pool, gymnasium, and beautiful concert hall, made possible because they pay for themselves by being set to the public. Private institution said to issue 15,000 annual reports for publicity and funds.*

properly trained blind youth can make good in the world, a large proportion of our graduates do so; hence our aim is to raise as many as possible to the plane of efficiency. But very many of our pupils who do not graduate from school fail to make good, some of these even leading a vagabond existence. Our results are thus probably at once far better and somewhat worse than those of Western Europe today. In Germany, for instance, the whole matter



*Common kitchen for the great Institution for the Catholic Blind of the Rhine Province, at Düren. "Sisters" do the work.*

has been thought over, worked over, and settled once for all, and this conclusion reached: *that blindness incapacitates one for earning his living; that it is folly as well as cruelty to expect the blind to get on in the world of competition without special aid; hence they must be spared the effort and the mortification of attempting it.* The blind are therefore no problem, as are the insane, and any excess of expenditure must go to the latter. One director told me that the blind should certainly not receive pure charity for nothing, but should be trained to receive it for something. This man, who is an extremist, not only believes but carries out his belief that all blind children of his community should be gathered into the institution, schooled and trained to the maximum efficiency in some trade, and be given regular employment at it within the institution throughout their whole working life, and thereafter be kept on there in comfort until they die—a living illustration, this, of the completed system of caring for the blind from the cradle to the grave. Perhaps as they grow older they enjoy seeing ahead of them increased doles of tobacco, snuff, and beer. Most Germans, however, go on the principle that the blind should be trained to leave the institution in early adult life, but because

they cannot take care of themselves, even though skilled, industrious, and businesslike, the institution must keep in touch with them always, and aid them as a parent would its children. It is settled that a few stock trades supply the best and most nearly self-sustaining occupations for the blind. Hence it is that the institutions seem to be mainly workshops—shops for beginners, for adult apprentices, and for skilled workmen. But such shops, with such industry, such results, we American school-men, with our industrial departments, never see at home. Our product is usually but incidental to instruction; the European is the real thing, and will stand competition. The instructors themselves are skilled artisans, real masters of handicraft, and are always men with sight. They are conscious of teaching the only practical subject of the school, and of being the chief agents of the effectiveness of the institution. To be sure, the girls are taught sewing and other women's handiwork, but only as a useful side issue. The government is naturally interested to purchase certain of the products of the public institutions, and does so. At Leipsic I saw several huge boxes of horse brushes, made by the blind, stored and ready for the emergency of war.



*Part of pupils' dining room, prepared for lunch. Institution for the Blind, Düren.*

In the three or four story buildings of such a compound institution as I have outlined, the workshops occupy the ground floor, if that is large enough; otherwise they may be continued in long, shedlike structures. The single kitchen is also on this floor; it is spacious, well equipped, and pleasing in every way. In those institutions which have recently rebuilt in whole or in part, like the lower school in a suburb of Breslau and the great institutions at Düren and Chemnitz, the kitchens have hotel equipment and are really splendid. I found central or wholesale cooking everywhere. A director admitted to me that this *Massenkochen* was not ideal, but cheap. Agreeable as is my recollection of these kitchens, I cannot say as much for the dining rooms I visited at meal time. The food was invariably good, plentiful, and provided five times a day (four times in the dining room and a lunch handed out elsewhere). The manner of serving seemed unnecessarily primitive, the bareness of it only showing off the table manners of the "inmates" in a cruel way. However, all ate with eagerness and satisfaction; everybody looked well fed, therefore, what more could they want? No director ever apologized to me for the sight; nevertheless, it was nearly everywhere the same, and remains the one blot in an otherwise memorable visit to some of the newest and grandest institutions in the world. It seemed a strange reflection of my impression that

the German term for this part of the household is *Ökonomie*.

As a whole, the buildings themselves are better and finer than I expected to find them. Though some of the old ones are barracklike enough, all the newer ones—and reconstruction is busy over there—are models of their kind, both inside and out. I have never seen equal attention paid elsewhere to the comfort and whims of blind adults; for whereas the boys and the girls are generally slept in great dormitories, these adults are almost always given the privacy of single or double rooms, together with every reasonable liberty and privilege they can wish for. All save the aged and the infirm are required to work, but they receive their earnings, out of which they pay a nominal board or keep themselves, as the case may be. They appeared to me to be more contented with their lot than are the inmates of the American homes for the blind with which I am acquainted. I was troubled, however, to observe in one beautiful new home for the aged of both sexes that no effort whatsoever was made to induce the men and women to read, that greatest of all resources for the shut-in blind, and there was in the home a lending library of embossed books.

I must not stop to describe the many fine new buildings I saw, and it would be invidious to single out a few; but I must devote some space to the great new Saxon colony at Chemnitz, considered to be the



*Chemnitz; a living room for schoolgirls.*

most complete institution of its kind in the world. It is built on the separate house or so-called "pavilion plan," and is dual in nature; that is, it provides for about 300 blind and 500 feeble-minded youth. These two classes are a unit here only in that all the forty buildings are heated and lighted from a common plant, and that the same laundry, kitchen, gymnasium, and chapel does for all. It is claimed that the single great infirmary is resorted to by the feeble-minded only, the blind being rendered hardy and healthy by having to be out of doors,

at least as much as is required to go from building to building several times a day and in all weathers. The whole colony is divided, quantitatively and qualitatively, as to living, schooling, working, and playing. Every cottage has its own grounds and gardens. All are low structures, well built, bountifully equipped, and show unusual attention given to interior decoration. Though I spent but one day there, I never put in a fuller day, Director Dietrich leading me a magnificent chase of ten hours, with occasional stops for refreshments. My notes of this day, including a description of the famous Saxon system of aftercare, cover eighteen closely written pages.

The fine institution for the Catholic blind of the Rhine Province, at Düren, has recently added buildings on this pavilion plan, and the place is a good one to finish up with, as I did.

On the Continent, institution grounds are everywhere lovely, though very small, putting one in mind of Japanese gardens. The director has his own little kitchen



*Public Institution for the Instruction of the Blind and of the Feeble-Minded of the Kingdom of Saxony, at Altendorf, Although contrary to the Saxon plan of aftercare of former pupils,*



garden and flower garden, where he not infrequently keeps bees for pastime; resident teachers also have their private plots; even the pupils have individual gardens. The visitor must not look for the prodigality of playground so common in America, however; in fact, he must not look for much of any real playgrounds as we understand them. There are always gymnasia where physical exercise is carried out with the utmost system—even the men and women from the workshops being required to take regular relief exercise there. Outdoor bowling alleys are often met with, and one sees directed games in the yards and spirited soldier play. But there is nothing resembling sports in athletics. I inquired why. "Oh," said my host, a most progressive director, "the public would never countenance it." "But how does this concern the public?" asked I. "I'll tell you a story," said he. "A few years ago I put up certain jumping apparatus in my gymnasium. A boy fell from it and was hurt. The police learning of the occurrence, I was forthwith summoned before a magis-



*Chemnitz, blind boys conducted to dinner by their caretakers.*

trate to explain why I permitted anything in my institution which imperiled the safety of the blind. Of course I ordered the apparatus taken down, being naturally unwilling to invite further arrest. That is the reason we keep to a certain few accepted games. I judge you Americans are not so circumscribed." I told him I should feel very sorry if we were hampered in this manner; that the life of the blind was too apt to be monotonous, and that our methods demanded the spur of new achieve-



*a suburb of Chemnitz. The eighteen buildings devoted chiefly to the blind occupy about one-half of the foreground, a small house (Mädchenheim) has been built just outside these grounds.*

ments, enthusiasms, and inspiration of environment. I am sure he felt that the European plan resulted in the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

Ah, but it does one good to talk with those men! Blindness and the blind is their business, their life work. They know it through and through as a profession, in which they have risen by merit to the post of something like village patriarchs. They know they will never be disturbed in posi-



*Imperial Institution for the Blind, Vienna; blind girls in the school park.*

ages to send out yearly to the profession some 200 skeleton accounts of his admirable school and shop, had to beg for the privilege of thus wasting money intended for the benefit of the blind, the government official demanding, "What have other blind institutions to do with

us?" Nevertheless, instead of regular reports, most directors issue occasional special treatises, monographs, reprints of convention papers, etc., which are of great in-



*Children's gardens, Kindergarten for the Blind, Prague.*

tion until compelled to retire on an old age pension. Therefore they are serenely secure and happy in the consciousness of having lived to good purpose in the service of others. My judgment of these directors is that they speak as men having authority, as experts who have advice for those who come to them.

Asking why so few of them publish annual reports, I found the reason to be that they do not have to; besides, such reports cost money. Of course the private institutions, which have a special board of managers, issue reports; but the public ones, which correspond to our state institutions, simply make written reports to those government educational authorities to whom alone they are responsible. A director of one such institution, who man-

trinsic value—more so than annual reports written under compulsion are apt to be. It is customary for any great occasion or anniversary to bring forth an exhaustive history. Jubilee and centenary histories of several institutions have recently appeared in *editions de luxe*.

Continental institutions for the blind, whether public or not, commonly have two fiscal accounts, one for moneys incidental to school instruction, including the necessary maintenance, and another for the department of trade teaching and the continued employment of discharged pupils, whether at the institution or elsewhere, the former being considered public funds, the latter private and charitable. The one is made necessary by the law of education for all; the other is based upon the estab-

lished principle that all blind ex-school pupils need after-care, and must have it, or the system would be incomplete. Compulsory school attendance from the sixth to the fourteenth year of age is meant to include the blind, but it cannot always do so, because compulsory institutional attendance is quite another matter, and exists only in one or two localities. I found one small day school in Vienna and a large one in Berlin, of which latter I shall have



*Gymnasium of the Institution for the Blind and the Deaf-Muted at Chemnitz. Concerts and plays, given by the blind there, attract much local attention.*

building until age or invalidism admits them to the retreat.

I have said that school instruction stops at fourteen, but just as compulsory "con-

early. Still he is not thrust forth like a bird from its nest, but is kept on until fully prepared. In some places he is even retained as a boarder in the men's home, which he is expected to leave sooner or later, when conditions are favorable. The women may remain in their home



*Long story for the men of the workshops, Duren. Director Baldus standing by the door.*

more to say, but Continental conviction is that the blind require special institutional life and schooling. Realizing as they do that a blind youth cannot learn a trade in the world, they provide him instruction at the institution, where he serves an apprenticeship of several years until he is thorough master of some handicraft. As soon as he is "confirmed," and confirmation is expected for every child at about fourteen, he is henceforth a child no longer, goes no more to school, but to work. He is a "grown-up"—an *Erwachsene*—and as such, life is for him thenceforth labor. A bank account is opened, where he puts the proportion of his earnings allotted him. His savings are obviously according to his proficiency and his thrift. Every reasonable spur is used to get him to master his trade

tinuation lessons" are provided for the seeing youth of Germany up to their eighteenth year, or during their apprenticeship, so the blind apprentices receive a few hours weekly of continuation lessons. The instruction for them is special, also, having a direct bearing upon the trade to be followed, and consists of business arithmetic, simple bookkeeping, salesmanship, civics, and a full and complete knowledge of the materials entering, for example, into one of the two great staple trades of basket making or brush making—where the wires or the bristles come from, how they are produced, how they are imported, what their market price is, etc. All this is eminently practical, and naturally the young men, who are everywhere more restless than the young women, and are therefore



*Instruction in basket making, Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna*

more apt to branch out for themselves, receive more such lessons than they. The subject of continuation lessons for all working people is destined to receive the world over increased rather than diminished attention. German-speaking people, who are past masters in it, owe to it a great part of their industrial advancement.

To return to the matter of funds. Though there are a few free places in some institutions, as a rule all pupils, young and old, are paid for by their home parish or community, and, if so, the community's sense of thrift is seldom equal to extending a child's school days beyond the age required by law. For the sooner he begins to earn something at a trade, the earlier the parish begins to be relieved of the burden of his maintenance.

With the closing of his school days the pupil passes at once into the shop and the protection of the "aftercare" fund. Every institution has more or less money in a fund of this kind, received from private sources. Many rich people the world over act on the principle of *richesse oblige*, and Germany and Austria each does its part nobly. It is the proper thing for the merchants of Hamburg, for example, to bequeath certain sums to the cause of the unfortunate, and there even the living expenses of the blind children in the school department of the institution are met from private association resources. Institutions

having only small aftercare funds in their control can do but little with them. But such an institution as that at Chemnitz, which has accumulated a fund of nearly 2,000,000 marks, gives an example of big school and of larger aftercare. So Director Dietrich has two offices—one with a single clerk for his institution affairs, and one with four clerks for his aftercare duties; his institution may be said to run itself, while the care of his ex-pupils takes most of his time and energy. This work is complicated because it strives to deal adequately and yet justly with about 500 adult blind people, living all over the kingdom of Saxony, all of them former pupils of the institution. Imagine keeping in touch with all these scattered people through patrons, visits, and correspondence, supplying their raw materials at cost, often marketing their goods for them—keeping every one in a chain managed from the central institution by one man holding the purse strings—disciplining and regulating them through money doles according to their needs and merits; for each member receives something anyhow, from 40 to 200 marks a year, that is, unless, for example, he marries another blind person, for which indiscretion he would be dropped from the chain. Imagine all this, I say, and you have before you the essentials of the celebrated Saxon system of aftercare of its blind.

According to the Saxon plan, the natural





*Orchestra of the Great Institution for the Training of Poor Blind Children and the Care of Patients with Eye Diseases in the Kradshim, Prague. This school forms a link between the Kindergarten and the Karlová school mentioned. Founded in 1870. Conducted and taught by "Sisters." Instruction given much as in Germany and Bohemia. The only school which I found still using Klein's line type, along with Braille and Taylor's octagonal arithmetic slate.*

<sup>1</sup> Incorporated into the eye clinics are now held at a local hospital.

desire of the individual for the freedom of home life, be it ever so humble, is consulted, and the blind are aided in every way to remain in the world. Then this plan does not sever home ties or relieve the relatives of all responsibility in the matter. I visited thirteen of these people in their rooms or in their own little workshops in the city of Chemnitz. Director Dietrich, who went with me, was everywhere welcomed gladly as "our director." Was he not, indeed, a father to them? He was a smiling, happy man as he took me about, and his people certainly seemed thankful and contented—"contented with their bit of soup and sausage."

This Saxon system depends for its success not only upon a large fund and devoted enthusiasm for the work, but also upon the fact that Saxony is a thickly settled and compact little kingdom. Most of the directors with whom I talked on the matter preferred to carry out the so-called mixed system of aftercare. Their theory is based upon the claim that some, perhaps most, of the blind, however well taught and thrifty, should be spared the loneliness and exertion of living and laboring in the community at large, claiming that life can there be at best a bare existence based on sentiment. Therefore the mixed system provides workshops, either letting the workers live scattered where they will, or encouraging them to have rooms in small com-

munities of blind people, where they can be both protected and favored. Leipsic affords a most interesting example of the former practice (and there are many blind workers there not in the chain administered from Chemnitz), Berlin of the latter, where the Moon Blind Association now devotes itself to the carrying on of such a community house. There they say the blind enjoy life better\* when together; that they can work to greater advantage in a special workshop than in single rooms; and that living in one place and working in another affords the variety so necessary to equanimity in the rather monotonous life of the blind. It must be said, therefore, that the Germans have not settled the aftercare plan so satisfactorily to themselves as they have the kind of work the blind must do. The fact that quite a number of young men are prepared in most of the schools to tune pianos in factories, and do so, earning thereby twice as much as by any other trade, has no effect on the general proposition that the blind must follow one of the stock trades, and that the blind cannot earn their living and ought not to be asked to do so.

Ascertaining that the Royal Institution for the Blind at Steglitz, a suburb of Berlin, was having its spring recess early in April, I postponed my visit for a few days. I need not have done so, as the greater part of the institution—the workshops—



*New Home for Aged Blind Men and Women, Hamburg (from its gardens). The "Central Leending Library" in this building circulates books throughout Germany.*



*Institution for the Protestant Blind of the Rhine Province, at Neuwied on the Rhine. Queen Carmen Sylva, of Roumania, belongs to the House of Wied, from which this town takes its name.*

was in full swing. However, when I did go there I became at once as a former teacher of the blind profoundly interested.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter I observed classes in many schools, always being deeply and fully impressed alike with the method and with the thoroughness of the instruction. The backward pupils are taught by themselves. The feeble-minded blind are not retained, but are provided for somewhere else, like other incapables. School teaching is most evidently a profession over there. The teachers are almost invariably men, and have been cautiously chosen for fitness. I say cautiously, because when once definitely appointed they cannot be removed except for extraordinary cause. They are non-resident in the sense of providing for themselves and families, either outside the institution or in suites of rooms inside. Most directors provide their own food, living in small suites, where it would be inconvenient to entertain guests. And indeed to do so is

<sup>1</sup>For 62 speaking illustrations of the means, methods, and aims of these schools for the blind see *Der Blindenunterricht*, a series of papers prepared by the director and staff of the Imperial Institution for the Blind, Vienna, and published by A. Pichlers Witwe und Sohn, Vienna, 1910. (254 pp. Illustrated.)

not a custom on the Continent. The teachers have supervisory duties in turn, and each is also in charge of some side department, such as the school printing office or the library. One man told me he gave forty hours a week to definite institution work. All whom I met were not only excellent instructors, they were earnest and devoted men, full of the subject and anxious to tell me about it. They showed me appliances in great variety and profusion, always accurately and well made, such as Braille-writers or guides for pencil writing, in Germany, and slates for pin-type writing, in Austria. At Nuremberg the director, who is blind, showed me his ingenious machine for writing common Roman capitals in points and one for writing two Braille letters at a stroke, something after the fashion of the American kleidograph. He also exhibited for me his building blocks for the blind and, what pleased me most of all, his method of drawing—simply warming with the fingers a wax-covered string and pressing it in desired outlines on to a common drawing board.

In every school there is a profusion of objects for instruction. No American school can show anything like such an array. These are not so much the expensive, stuffed specimens we are apt to think of as belonging to a school museum as they are common, every-day articles which children with sight see at one time or another and understand. There are the manifold objects for nature study, minerals, nuts and seeds, and native birds, not those of foreign countries; and the somewhat elaborate school productions, partly of former pupils, partly of teachers, representing in miniature (nearly all of them dissectible) such things as a coal or a salt mine, a church and steeple, a tannery, a mole's nest, an electric



*Royal Institution for the Blind, Munich. Large, spacious structure, erected 1834-35.*

street car, and, floor by floor, the institution itself. There seemed no end to these things. The Imperial Institution at Vienna overflowed from special rooms to the walls of all school corridors and of many classrooms. The Jewish institution there had a huge room so full of models that once inside I felt like the man who couldn't see the wood for the trees.

In this latter institution, by the way, the director had the pupils do artistic clay and wax modeling for me, likewise elastic string and pin drawing; he also showed me good, practical working in simple carpentry, wood turning, bent wire and sandstone shaping. A class of small children at the beautiful new institution erected under Director Wagner at Prague were greatly enjoying themselves cutting, sawing, splitting, and boring wood by means of simple machines contrived by their clever teacher.

I could but be deeply impressed with all this sort of thing. The Germans are nothing if not practical. They permit little in school or in directed play which has not a pedagogic purpose. All this making and doing which I saw everywhere, while aiming as manual training to broaden and correct the children's experiences, yet has as chief end the perfection of the producing power of the hand. They call it *Handfertigkeitunterricht*, for which our nearest equivalent is "hand training." It is perhaps the fundamental subject of the school curriculum, and is started with the child of five years in the kindergarten department, which they call the preparatory school—*Vorschule*. Just think what a deft and skilled hand means to the blind handicraftsman—a saving of raw material, an economy of time, and the making of marketable wares, three



*Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna. Object: The intellectual, religious, and industrial education and training in general culture of the blind of both sexes; limits of admission, 9 to 16 years.*



*Kindergarten building, just finished (1909), of the beautiful new institution for the blind, on the heights above Stuttgart. Private; prints a model report.*

factors in production which lead to mightier consequences to those who must labor in darkness than to those who can work in light. See the application of this hand training to brush making. The blind who cannot estimate quickly by touch and muscle-sense the proper number of bristles needed to fill similar successive holes in a brush-back cannot profitably work at this excellent trade. If the bundle is too large, it will not go into the hole; if it is too small, it will not stay in. The workers are paid by the 100 holes filled; anybody who stops long to judge the number picked up or to count will earn but little. I was informed in more than one institution that girls, because of their more highly developed fingers, earn better wages at brush making than men do; at some places this trade, including every kind of brush except the tooth brush, has been reserved for the girls and women, because the men can profitably do a greater variety of things—such as willow basket work, mat and rope making,



*The Royal Institution for the Blind at Hanover. Present building erected 1897. Said to have the largest printing plant for the blind in Germany.*



*Instruction in brush making, Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna.*

chair caning, and twisted straw chair seating, which is like our rush seating.

I do not mean to give the impression that the German schools confine themselves to motor activities. Their purely intellectual studies, while elementary, are doubtless as well taught as anywhere else in the world. I listened with delight to classes in grammar, literature, and mental arithmetic. Nevertheless, subjects like geography seem to be taught almost wholly by doing, measuring, and making; therein the German "thoroughness or nothing" principle appeared to me to fill up its measure and to run over. Nothing is left for the pupil to learn by himself; his initiative is not trusted. For instance, in his first year of geography—home geography—he begins with his classroom, which he investigates and reports on, measures and draws to scale, reproducing and placing everything in it correctly. Possibly this year may include other parts of the institution, but how much is unimportant, thoroughness as far as he gets being the end. When the whole institution and grounds are thus concretely understood, he begins, in somewhat the same way, the study of the city—the main streets, the location of the important buildings, particularly the railroad stations. After all this is fixed, he studies the state or district in which the institution city lies, and he does this usually by following the railroads on the map or by map drawing, corroborated

later, more or less, by actual travel and by school excursions. Then succeeds a more rapid study of the country as a whole. If the class is bright or the teacher independent, there may be a little venturing into adjacent lands. When I jokingly asked if they ever by any possibility reached America, "Only by hearsay," was the good-natured answer. "At the rate our German blind children travel it is evident that there is not time to go far afield in a subject like geography. Their school days, as such, come to an end at the age of fourteen. Nevertheless, our aim is to give pretty much the equivalent of the common or *Volkschule* training, and we generally succeed. No, we do not believe in the higher education of the blind, for it generally leads to discontent and unhappiness."

A somewhat composite subject to which we American blind-school men pay little direct attention is perception lessons, sense cultivation, and "orientation." We leave our pupils to pick up this sort of thing, and they seem to do so. The possession by the blind of the faculty of recognizing objects through their four senses, and the ability to locate themselves at any and all times in space and to get about readily alone, is deemed by the practical Germans a too vitally important one to be left to hazard. Perhaps the German solicitude and the American confidence may profitably borrow something one from the other.





*Students in class room at the Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna.*

A realization of conditions in these foreign countries, where music is in the air and where competition in playing and teaching music is strenuous, will enable us Americans to judge leniently the attitude towards this subject held by Austrian and German schools for the blind. There being almost no chance for the blind musician to make good in the world, music is taught only from the standpoint of culture, pleasure, and exploitation. A school for the blind would be a bare place indeed without music. A brass band is considered a safety valve, even in a working home for blind men. And so from the first there is much singing in the schools and much instrumental music. Choral work is everywhere excellent, as might be expected. School orchestras performed for me in several places most acceptably. In one place I was astonished at the skillful solo playing of one boy after another on the violin, flute, cello, and French horn. The school, which was a small one in a very musical city, employed a local celebrity to come in as music instructor. I congratulated the director on the results attained. "Yes," he said, "they play very well. It is a great satisfaction to them and it pleases the public." "But," said I, "is there no chance for any of these boys to follow

music for a livelihood?" "Oh, no; not at all," he replied. "There is nothing for them but handicraft; their music will always be a pleasure and a solace to them, nothing more." I did not tell him how much better I enjoyed the playing when I closed my eyes and did not see the poor appearance of the players. This was the school where a popular bowling alley had been turned into a workshop and store-rooms, because, as the director actually admitted, the balls kept getting out into the walks and were liable to cause stumbling and other accidents to the pupils. It was difficult for me always to acquiesce in the German finality.

I made several visits to the unique, non-residential school and shops for the blind in Berlin. Here Director Kull conducts a most interesting institution. On the front of a square court the whole great building is workshops for "grown-ups." These come in daily from home or rooms in the city and work at the usual four trades of chair caning, basket making, brush making, and broom making. The aim is for each worker to become expert at one of these, and only one. The best and most rapid earns from three to four marks in a day of seven hours, but the average daily earnings are two marks, and the thrifty person



*Instruction in hand-training: Carpentry and wood turning, Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna.*

who is content with mere creature comforts can subsist in Berlin on these two marks, though such a one expects and does receive auxiliary doles from the aftercare fund. Here, as also in other places, this fund provides country retreats to which tired

women are sent in turn during the summer. On the other side of the court, occupying two floors, is the day school for sixty blind youth, which school makes the institution unique. Occupying the third floor is a city school for orphan (not blind) girls who have finished their ordinarily required schooling and come here to a continuation school for the domestic training which shall fit them to be house servants. The Berlin plan of caring for all charges being decentralizing, these orphans live with foster parents. They are required to conduct to and from school daily the blind children who live near them. Both are one-session schools and close at noon. I took pains to see them start out for home together, the little mothers leading by the hand one or two beknapsacked youngsters. To me this was a satisfactory though touching sight. Berlin alone is said to furnish the conditions favorable to such coöperation. But it works so well there I cannot see why it could not be made to do so elsewhere. No doubt the blind children miss the special care and opportunities inseparable from a good residential school, together with some music and physical training. (Their little gymnasium was half filled with raw materials and shop products.) This is on the one hand; on the other, they miss also the institution-



*Instruction in hand-training: Bent-iron work, Jewish Institution for the Blind, Vienna. Notice the herring-bone flooring in hard wood. This is common in Continental institutions.*



*A corner of the Historical Museum at the Imperial Institution for the Blind, Vienna.*

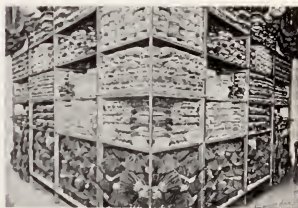
ization bound to follow any but the most alert and painstaking management of the usual institution. Nevertheless, here as elsewhere the common school leads to the trade school, with its continuation lessons, and to the inevitable workshop for most. A few of the young men prepare themselves to follow the trade of factory piano tuning, a much better paying though more limited occupation than the handicrafts.

There is in every institution a well-stocked library, consisting chiefly of books handwritten in Braille by philanthropic people of the leisure class, but also of many similar books embossed from machine-made plates. Though nearly every institution has a printing department of its own, where one or two blind girls do all the work of embossing the plates, printing the sheets, and binding the books, yet most of these books seem to come from a few institution printing offices, such as Hanover, Berlin, and Vienna, and from the private presses of a most enterprising blind man in Hamburg. The plates are usually folds of zinc, embossed interlineally; the embossing appliances, stereotype makers of German pattern and manufacture—excellent machines, arranged to free the left hand of the operator for reading copy; and the printing presses, powerful hand-lever affairs, slow but sure in operation. So

many institutions are printing that the whole number of publications is already large, and the books are sold for very little



*Women making brushes at the Working Home for the Blind, Königswusterhausen, near Berlin. (Figures disguised by the artist by request of the sitters.)*



*Stacks of brushes at the Working Home for the Blind, at Königswusterhausen, near Berlin. Only capable workers, both men and women, admitted.*



*Garden schoolroom and rabbit warren, Kindergarten for the Blind, Prague. Director Wagner (in the foreground), of the Klatz Institution for the Blind, is also in charge of the Kindergarten.*

when compared with the results of our rapid process printing. We carry on printing as a business for the sake of providing the blind with a great deal of reading matter. The Austrians and the Germans prefer to make book production an opportunity to employ blind people, irrespective of whether the product is great or little. And they are able to undersell us every time. The Braille character employed is large gage to suit the touch of handicraft workers and many books appear in two editions, in contractions, and in full spelling, so as to suit all tastes and predilections. The libraries circulate books to outside readers, the institutions paying the first carriage, the borrower the return. There seemed to be no concession in transportation rates.

I have described the collections for object teaching found in every school visited. Two historical museums shown me—the recently collected and specially housed one at the Royal Institution at Steglitz; the other older and fuller one in the Imperial Institution in Vienna, which interested me greatly. They comprise specimens showing the evolution of appliances for the blind from the origins of the institutions to date. There are appliances simple and complex for tangible writing in Roman letter and every kind of line and point alphabet, the many and various means to enable the blind to correspond with friends who read with the eyes; sample books embossed in each

of the various types and systems, from that of Haüy, in 1784, to that of Smith, in 1878; the number is too bewildering to notice here. I would refer the interested reader to the article, *Hochdruck für Blinde*, in Mell's Handbook,<sup>1</sup> also, for a general description of the subject, to the article, *Museum des Blindenunterrichtes*, in the same volume. Besides every imaginable school appliance, there is in these museums shelf after shelf of books, literature, and pictures relating to blindness and the blind. It is no wonder that Mr. Anagnos, after inspecting, in 1900, the Vienna collection, a collection unmatched in the world, was inspired to get together the unique and special library he left behind him. Future students of the general subject are thus beholden to such farseeing collectors as have labored to gather and preserve in concrete form the story of progress and failure in our special work from the beginnings down to the present day.

When an American student visits thoughtfully the institutions I visited, and does this sympathetically and somewhat from the viewpoint of native experts in the subject, he must be a dull and opinionated man not to see that lessons have been taught him which he will not soon forget. And particularly is this true after browsing in their historical museums, for in them he

<sup>1</sup>"*Encyklopädisches Handbuch des Blindenunterrichtes*." Von Alexander Mell. Verlag von A. Pichlers Witve und Sohn. Wien. 1900.



perceives that the advanced methods and tools of today are but the resultants of much past thinking and devoted contriving how to be able best to make up to the blind for the want of the inestimable boon of eyesight. He who perhaps came criticising and shirring the crude steps of the past remains to be grateful and to pay his homage. True, the American sees abroad survivals with which he is happily far less encumbered. He rejects the settled dictum that all the blind must be brought to the common level of the handicraft trade, and that practically all are bound to be always objects of charity, and hence must be treated as subjects of it while still school children—brought to an institution and reared there in an atmosphere of blindness, with not only no probability of release, but rather the sure prospect of living and dying there. Where I found this thing it made me sad and resentful. Perhaps it was good busi-



*Even at the Public Day School for the Blind of the City of Berlin blind children starting for home at noon, their guides being seeing girls attending school in the same building.*

ness; but I could not reconcile myself to the inevitableness of it. I came gradually to understand, however, that the lot of these blind unfortunates was somewhat in line with that of other poor and unfortunate people—in the tense struggle for existence life is hard and grinding for them all. Per-

haps the statement given me by a positive German director, that as blindness incapacitates for the world, so he who sends them forth to sink or swim in battling with the waves of competition is no friend to the blind but a cruel and relentless foe—perhaps this point of view contains a grain of truth. All must admit its application to some blind people; by no means all the Germans would apply it generally. Indeed, I finally found one director who approved of our American plan of developing each blind pupil according to his ability and his bent, and he was doing this as far as he could. But his plan meant the separation



*Blind children in a school in Berlin. Double desks universal throughout Germany and Austria.*



*The usual hand-lever press for printing Braille books.*

at fourteen of the promising from the unpromising—the former to be pushed at every reasonable cost to efficiency and final independence, the latter to be perfected at some simple trade and employed at it either in the common workshop or elsewhere; at any rate, to have their lives smoothed away in kindly fashion as long as they lived. This, in his opinion, was not only good business, but also justice and true charity. With one modification I agreed with him: there are other means in America of earning one's way than by handicraft. I would therefore encourage and help as many as possible to work out their own salvation, not congregated



*A typical appliance for embossing metal plates in Braille.*

in workshops or indeed congregated at all after school days, but distributed in the several communities in which they naturally belong.

The above paragraph contains in brief my impressions of the essential difference between the German and Austrian treatment of the blind and our own. It may be that the two will diverge less in the future than they do now, for in America the sense of responsibility for the adult blind, newly sprung up, is growing apace, while abroad the adult blind are now bestirring themselves for the betterment of their common lot. An organization has been recently founded in Germany, called the *Blindencongress*. It has had two meetings. This past summer has seen a split from this association, called the *Blindentag*, which met at Dresden.

Thus things pertaining to the blind are seen to be not wholly settled even in Germany. I found the directors of different minds there, just as the superintendents are here. I found the general tendency was towards either small institutions or the division of large ones into small groups for living and working; the building or rebuilding, according to the pavilion plan, of small, separate houses; and the expenditure of a good deal of money for beautiful structures and grounds, not omitting attention to decorations and to modern sanitary and hygienic conditions. I was surprised to find compulsory school attendance gener-

ally inapplicable to the blind—surprised to see expediency in dress and personal appearance so strongly and barely economical, and this part of the pupil's care so often left to servants, and morning prayers so perfunctorily carried out in Protestant communities; surprised to perceive the institutions so much more workshops than schools, even the school life from the beginning being directed to a studied end; and the potent subject of music relegated to the province of mere pleasurable resource and publicity. I was not prepared to find co-education everywhere; nearly all the teachers men; no official, not even the director, receiving his living at the institution. I was profoundly impressed with the thoroughness of the teaching and the abundance of the equipment for object teaching and sense perception lessons, but disappointed at discovering no enterprise in sports and athletics. The whole tendency seemed to be more quieting than stimulating—a schooling of the blind for contentment with their lowly lot. But, after all, I came away realizing that we Americans do not know everything about the work; that my foreign hosts were rather more expert in their own province than we in ours; and that for this they can thank stability of position, and we, instability. Nevertheless, my final reaction is that, as to the more promising ideal in the great future of the blind, the Americans have it.



